

Kulshan Creek kids plant neighborhood butterfly garden

By TAHLIA GANSER
Staff Writer

MOUNT VERNON — The Kulshan Creek Trail should soon be aflutter with a variety of butterflies and hummingbirds, thanks to a new garden planted by neighborhood children Saturday.

In fact, one butterfly arrived to scope out the new site during the afternoon, just after the children smoothed 11 cubic yards of dirt for new butterfly-friendly vegetation.

A sunny day welcomed about 20 Kulshan Creek neighborhood gardeners, ages 6 to 12, who are part of Tutor Time, an after-school program operated by Skagit County Youth and Family Services.

The county agency partnered with Skagit Valley Backyard Wildlife Habitat Team to involve the children in making a new habitat to foster winged wildlife along the trail with the

See **BUTTERFLIES**, Page C4



Tahlia Ganser / Skagit Valley Herald

Kulshan Creek neighborhood residents Jonathan Suarez Cortez, 9, (left) and Lazaro Cruz-Hernandez, 11, plant a flower in a new butterfly garden Saturday along Kulshan Creek Trail in east Mount Vernon.

Kulshan Creek neighborhood children and the Skagit Valley Backyard Wildlife Habitat Team create a butterfly garden Saturday along Kulshan Creek Trail in east Mount Vernon.

**Tahlla Ganser
Skagit Valley
Herald**



Butterflies: Making it nicer for MV 'wildlife and childlife'

Continued from Page C1

garden and cedar birdhouses.

A few of the children said the best part was getting dirty, since some live in small nearby apartments without access to backyards.

"We're trying to make a better place for wildlife and childlife," said Backyard Wildlife leader Donna Schiram, who was teaching the children how to plant Saturday. "We're trying to encourage children to spend more time outside learning about wildlife and their habitat."

The children seemed engaged.

They raked, dug and watered, even sweat, for hours preparing the garden as a home for their new tiny winged neighbors.

Lazaro Cruz-Hernandez, 11, said he liked having a project to work on during the weekend, and said he will be excited to see the little creatures who find the new colorful garden designed just for them.

"I'm bored all the time Saturdays ... now we get to work with our friends and build stuff," Lazaro said.

Gabriel Cisneros, 12, said he was enjoying the day "because it's pretty good exercise, we get to hang out with our friends and work."

Gabriel soon found out work

wasn't all fun though. "The bad thing is, you get splinters and you get cuts," he said.

The gardeners planted Cascade daisies, crocosmias, native bleeding hearts, and a variety of other plants and flowers in the new butterfly garden. Those plants should attract more than a dozen species of butterflies as well as several types of hummingbirds.

On Friday night, the children also built 20 cedar birdhouses to place along the trail, hoping to woo swallows and chickadees. They hung them Saturday.

After all the plants were secure in the new butterfly garden, Gabriel took a step back to admire his work.

"It's kind of cute, it's beautiful, and all that," he said.

Lazaro said if it weren't for the Saturday gardening project, he would be "bored inside watching TV."

That was the point for Teresa Teynoza, Youth and Family Services Family Resource Specialist, who runs Tudor Time and helped plan the event.

"These kids need a lot of hands-on things," Teynoza said.

They also have a soccer team and take frequent excursions around the city.

Jon Gerondale, Mount Vernon Police Neighborhood Resource officer, who was visiting with the children Saturday,

said the garden was a perfect addition to the community garden along the Kulshan Trail, which began in 2003.

"I had no idea what a butterfly garden was, but it sounded pretty cool," he said.

Gerondale has been assigned to the Kulshan Creek neighborhood for several years. He encourages activities, such as the garden, that build a healthy community.

Prior to 2003, the Kulshan Creek Trail was unsafe, used by teens for a place to smoke, drinking and "get into trouble" because of its seclusion, Gerondale said.

The gardens, and other community projects, have turned it around, claiming it for more legitimate uses, he said.

The Backyard Wildlife Habitat team is a volunteer group striving to make parts of the county a Backyard Wildlife Habitat Community, certified by the National Wildlife Federation. The Kulshan Creek butterfly garden will fulfill one of the many requirements for the designation.

Gerondale said he does not suspect vandalism to be an issue with the new garden, as there have not been problems with the other gardens.

"Aside from the deer, we haven't had any vandalism," he said.